

AMERICANISM AND FORDISM

INTRODUCTION

Americanism and Fordism is unique among Gramsci's prison writings. The problems it sets out to analyse were contemporary ones, brought into prominence by events that had taken place since his imprisonment—the development of the corporate (fascist) economy, the depression, the first Soviet Five Year Plan. Yet, despite his isolation, he nevertheless succeeds in this essay in laying the groundwork for a persuasive analysis of trends in social and economic development which had passed by most of his active contemporaries and whose importance is only now becoming clear.

The basic question Gramsci asks himself in *Americanism and Fordism* is this: were the changes taking place within the world of production at the time he was writing of such importance as to constitute the beginnings of a new historical epoch, or were they merely a conjunction of events of no lasting significance? No definitive answer is offered, nor could one be demanded, but it is clear from the way he approaches the question, linking together features of the superstructures such as prohibition or the regulation of sexuality with changes in the socio-economic base, projecting each trend into the future as well as examining its roots in the past, that he regarded "Americanism" as a symptom of an historical development within the relations of production of the utmost importance, from which there could be no turning back.

The starting-point of *Americanism and Fordism* is the impact of America and American productive methods on Europe after the First World War. The fact that America had never known a feudal phase and was therefore free of parasitic residues of older modes of production has always intrigued European Marxists, ever since the days of Marx himself. In the early days of the Soviet Union much attention was paid to the American phenomenon, to the efficiency of American productive technique and even to the apparent democracy of American enterprise. There was also a general interest in the Soviet Union in the possibility of applying American ideas, notably those of Frederick Taylor on "Scientific Management", under Socialist relations of production. For Gramsci, the full-scale introduction of Americanism into Italy would have a different significance. It would represent a high point of capitalist development, the abolition of the last residues of feudalism.

Opposition to Americanism, as he saw it, came mostly from backward economic groups such as the "rural bourgeoisie" of petty landowners and their attendant parasites, but also from a reactionary intelligentsia, stuffed with myths about its cultural heritage and unable to accept its own uselessness and impending supersession by more vital forces. The working class, by contrast, he saw as not opposed to Americanism as such, nor even to its attendant effects in social life, but rather to the specific form it would take in conditions of intensified economic exploitation and authoritarian cultural repression. The victory of Americanism might also affect the political superstructures of fascism, now more and more embroiled (since the Concordat) with the Catholic Church, and increasingly torn between notions of a new order and a commitment to the most retrograde elements of culture and society.

An essential, though unspoken, premiss of *Americanism and Fordism* is that the revolutionary working-class movement was in a phase of retrenchment and defeat throughout the capitalist world. In the absence of an antagonistic revolutionary force any changes taking place within the mode of production could at most constitute what Gramsci, here and elsewhere in the *Quaderni*, terms a "passive revolution". Changes would take place, leading to the suppression of certain contradictions. But new contradictions would appear in their place. Not the least of the merits of *Americanism and Fordism* lies in its recognition of the fluidity of the situation and the complexity of the contradictions generated. Although in general it foresees a development, already prefigured in fascist Italy, in the direction of a more achieved form of state monopoly capitalism, it emphatically rejects any undialectical pessimism and leaves open the question of how the contradictions that this new development of capitalism will bring about will themselves be contested in their turn.

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A series of problems requires to be examined under the general and somewhat conventional heading "Americanism and Fordism". But first of all one should take account of the basic fact that solutions to these problems must necessarily be put forward within the contradictory conditions of modern society, which create complications, absurd positions, and moral and economic crises often tending towards catastrophe.

In generic terms one could say that Americanism and Fordism derive from an inherent necessity to achieve the organisation of a planned economy, and that the various problems examined here should be the links of the chain marking the passage from the old economic individualism to the planned economy. Problems arise from the various forms of resistance to this evolution encountered by the process of development, the source of the problems being difficulties inherent in both the *societas rerum* and the *societas hominum*.¹

The fact that a progressive initiative has been set in train by a particular social force is not without fundamental consequences: the "subaltern" forces, which have to be "manipulated" and "rationalised" to serve new ends, naturally put up a resistance. But resistance is also offered by certain sectors of the dominant forces, or at least by forces which are allied to those which are dominant. Prohibition, which in the United States was a necessary condition for developing a new type of worker suitable to "Fordised" industry, has failed as a result of the opposition of marginal and still backward forces and certainly not because of the opposition of either the industrialists or the workers (etc.).

A catalogue of some of the essentially most important or interesting problems, even if at first sight they do not appear to be in the forefront:

1. The replacement of the present plutocratic stratum by a new mechanism of accumulation and distribution of finance capital based directly on industrial production.
2. The question of sex.
3. The question of whether Americanism can constitute an historical "epoch", that is, whether it can determine a gradual evolution of the same type as the "passive revolution" examined

¹ "The society of things and the society of men": i.e. the natural and human worlds.

elsewhere and typical of the last century,² or whether on the other hand it does not simply represent the molecular accumulation of elements destined to produce an "explosion", that is, an upheaval on the French pattern.

4. The question of the "rationalisation" of the demographic composition of Europe.

5. The question of whether this evolution must have its starting-point within the industrial and productive world, or whether it can come from the outside, through the cautious but massive construction of a formal juridical arm which can guide from the outside the necessary evolution of the productive apparatus.

6. The question of the so-called "high wages" paid by Fordised and rationalised industry.

7. Fordism as the ultimate stage in the process of progressive attempts by industry to overcome the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.³

8. Psychoanalysis and its enormous diffusion since the war, as the expression of the increased moral coercion exercised by the apparatus of State and society on single individuals, and of the pathological crisis determined by this coercion.

9. Rotary Clubs and Free Masonry.

RATIONALISATION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF EUROPE

In Europe the various attempts which have been made to introduce certain aspects of Americanism and Fordism have been due to the old plutocratic stratum which would like to reconcile what, until proved to the contrary, appear to be irreconcilables: on the one hand the old, anachronistic, demographic social structure of Europe, and on the other hand an ultra-modern form of production

² "Passive revolution." For Gramsci's development of this concept, see pp. 106-114.

³ "Law of the Tendency", etc. See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, Chaps. 13-15. In Marxist economic analysis, the rate of profit is determined by the rate of exploitation (the ratio of unpaid, surplus labour to paid, necessary labour) and by the organic composition of capital (the ratio of capital expended on materials, use of machinery, etc., to capital expended on wages). As the rate of exploitation rises the rate of profit tends to rise, but as the organic composition of capital rises the rate of profit tends to fall. In *Capital*, Vol. III, Marx argues that the long-run tendency of capitalist accumulation is to raise the organic composition of capital to such an extent that the rate of profit will fall even if the rate of exploitation is rising. Attempts to overcome the tendency require therefore a very considerable rise in the rate of exploitation, which Gramsci sees as happening through "Fordist" methods of intensification and rationalisation of labour.

and of working methods—such as is offered by the most advanced American variety, the industry of Henry Ford.

For this reason, the introduction of Fordism encounters so much “intellectual” and “moral” resistance, and takes place in particularly brutal and insidious forms, and by means of the most extreme coercion. To put it crudely, Europe would like to have a full barrel and a drunken wife, to have all the benefits which Fordism brings to its competitive power while retaining its army of parasites who, by consuming vast sums of surplus value, aggravate initial costs and reduce competitive power on the international market. The reaction of Europe to Americanism merits, therefore, close examination. From its analysis can be derived more than one element necessary for the understanding of the present situation of a number of states in the old world and the political events of the post-war period.

Americanism, in its most developed form, requires a preliminary condition which has not attracted the attention of the American writers who have treated the problems arising from it, since in America it exists quite “naturally”. This condition could be called “a rational demographic composition” and consists in the fact that there do not exist numerous classes with no essential function in the world of production, in other words classes which are purely parasitic. European “tradition”, European “civilisation”, is, conversely, characterised precisely by the existence of such classes, created by the “richness” and “complexity” of past history. This past history has left behind a heap of passive sedimentations produced by the phenomenon of the saturation and fossilisation of civil-service personnel and intellectuals, of clergy and landowners, piratical commerce and the professional (and later conscript, but for the officers always professional) army. One could even say that the more historic a nation the more numerous and burdensome are these sedimentations of idle and useless masses living on “their ancestral patrimony”, pensioners of economic history. Statistics of these economically passive elements (in a social sense) are very hard to work out because it is impossible to find a “heading” under which they can be defined for the purposes of immediate research. But useful indications can be derived indirectly, for example, from the existence of specific forms of national life. The considerable number of large, medium-sized (or even small) agglomerations of an urban type with no industry (with no factories) is one such indication and one of the most significant.

On the so-called “mystery of Naples”: it is worth recalling the

observations made by Goethe about Naples and the "consoling moral conclusions" which Giustino Fortunato drew from them.⁴ Goethe was right to demolish the legend of the organic vagabondry [*lazzaronismo*]* of the Neapolitans, and to point out that, on the contrary, they are very active and industrious. But the question consists in examining the actual result of their industry. It is not in itself productive, nor is it directed towards satisfying the needs and demands of the productive classes. Naples is the city where the majority of Southern landowners, whether members of the nobility or not, spend the income from their estates. Around some tens of thousands of these landowning families, of greater or lesser importance, together with their immediate retinues of servants and lackeys, is organised the practical life of a large part of the city, its artisanal industries, its itinerant trades and the incredible way in which the immediate supply of goods and services is split up among the multitude of layabouts who hang around the streets. Another important part of the city is organised around transport and the wholesale trade, "Productive" industry, in the sense of one that creates and accumulates new goods, is relatively small despite the fact that in the official statistics Naples is classified as the fourth industrial city of Italy, after Milan, Turin and Genoa.

This socio-economic structure of Naples (on which it is now possible to have reasonably exact information, thanks to the activities of the provincial councils of the corporate economy)⁶ explains a great deal of the history of the city of Naples, so full of apparent contradictions and thorny political problems. The phenomenon of

⁴ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italienische Reise*. The "conclusions" drawn by Giustino Fortunato (1848-1932), a noted "meridionalist" intellectual and politician, are to be found in Fortunato's translation of the Neapolitan section (*Lettere da Napoli, di Volfgang Goethe, tradotte da GF*, Naples, 1917).

* Fortunato's short work on Goethe and his judgement on the Neapolitans has been republished by the Bibliografia Editrice di Rieti in the collection "Quaderni Critici" directed by Domenico Petri. On Fortunato's short work, worth reading is Luigi Einaudi's review in *La Riforma Sociale*, perhaps 1912.⁵

⁵ Actually 1918. Subsequently reprinted in *Le Lotte del Lavoro*, Turin, 1924, pp. 267-76.

⁶ Corporate here is more or less a synonym (or euphemism) for fascist, the Italian economy having been organised from 1926 in "Corporations", including labour corporations which effectively took the place of the trade unions. Elsewhere in this text when Gramsci speaks about the "corporate trend" (*indirizzo corporativo*) he is sometimes referring not to Fascism as such but to the organised ideology of corporatism which was already a major force in pre-fascist Italy, having supporters among progressive Catholics and reformist Socialists as well as among rationalising elements of Italian capitalism. Needless to say the form the corporate economy took under Mussolini, particularly after 1930, was not altogether that intended by the movement's non-fascist originators.

Naples is repeated on a large scale in Palermo and Rome, and also in a number of cities (the famous hundred cities)⁷ not only in Southern Italy and the islands, but in Central and even in Northern Italy (Bologna, to a certain extent, Parma, Ferrara, etc.). For much of the population of cities of this type, one can recall the proverb: "Where a horse shits a hundred sparrows feed."

The fact that has not yet been properly studied is this: that the ownership of medium-sized and small property in the rural areas is not in the hands of the peasant cultivators but of a small-town bourgeoisie and that the land is given over to primitive sharecropping [*mezzadria*], that is, rented in exchange for natural goods and services, or is leased against rent [*enfiteusi*]. This means that there exists, in proportion to gross landed income, an enormous bulk of petty and middle bourgeoisie living on "pensions" and "rents", which has created, in a species of economic literature truly worthy of *Candide*, the monstrous figure of the so-called "producers of savings", an economically unproductive stratum which not only extracts its own sustenance from the primitive labour of a specific number of peasants, but also manages to save. This is the most hideous and unhealthy means of capital accumulation, because it is founded on the iniquitous usurious exploitation of a peasantry kept on the verge of malnutrition, and because it is inordinately expensive, since the small saving of capital is offset by the incredible expenditure which is often necessary to maintain a high standard of living for such a great mass of absolute parasites. (The historical phenomenon whereby, in the Italian peninsula, since the fall of the mediaeval Communes and the decline of the spirit of capitalist initiative among the urban bourgeoisie, this abnormal and stagnation-creating situation has grown up, wave by wave, has been described by the historian Niccolò Rodolico as a "return to the earth", and has even been taken as an index of healthy national progress, such is the power of catch-phrases to annul the critical sense.)

Another source of absolute parasitism has always been the State administration. Renato Spaventa has reckoned that in Italy one tenth of the population (four million inhabitants) live off the state budget. Even today it happens that men who are still relatively young, not much above forty, in excellent health and at the height of their physical and intellectual capacities, after twenty-five years of state service cease to devote themselves to any productive activity

⁷ "Hundred Cities". See note 61 on p. 91.

but make do with more or less substantial pensions. However, a worker can only enjoy his pension from the age of sixty-five, and for a peasant there is no limit to the age up to which he may continue to work. (One result of this is that the average Italian is surprised when he hears it said that an American multi-millionaire continues to be active right up to the last day of his conscious life.) If in any family a priest becomes a canon, immediately, for the entire clan, "manual labour" becomes a "disgrace": the most one should do is to engage in commerce.

The composition had already been rendered "unhealthy" by long-term emigration and by the low rate of employment of women in work productive of new goods. The relationship between "potentially" active and passive population was one of the most unfavourable in Europe.* It is even more unfavourable if one takes into account the following:

1. Endemic diseases (malaria, etc.) which reduce the average work potential of the labour force.

2. The chronic state of malnutrition of many of the lower strata of the peasantry (as documented in the researches of Professor Mario Camis published in *La Riforma Sociale* in 1926).⁸ National averages of living standards should be broken down into class averages; if the national average hardly attains the standard scientifically established as indispensable, it follows obviously that a not inconsiderable stratum of the population lives in a state of chronic malnutrition. In the Senate discussion on the budget for 1929/30, Senator Mussolini affirmed that in some regions people live exclusively on wild plants and vegetables for whole seasons of the year.**

3. The endemic unemployment which exists in a number of agricultural regions and does not figure in official reports.

4. The really remarkable segment of the population which is absolutely parasitic and which requires for its service the labour of another immense and indirectly parasitic mass; and the semi-parasitic segment, which is so because it multiplies to an abnormal and unhealthy degree subordinate economic activities like commerce and intermediary functions in general.

* Cf. the research into this subject by Professor Mortara, for example, in *Prospettive Economiche* of 1922.

⁸ M. Camis, *Intorno alle condizioni economiche del popolo italiano*. "La Riforma Sociale", June 1926.

** Cf. the *Atti Parlamentari* for the session, and the speech by Senator Ugo Ancona, whose reactionary fancies were smartly slapped down by the head of the Government [Mussolini].

This situation is not unique to Italy; to a greater or lesser extent it exists also in all countries of Old Europe and it exists in an even worse form in India and China, which explains the historical stagnation of those countries and their politico-military impotence. (In the examination of this problem, what is immediately in question is not the form of economico-social organisation, but the rationality of the proportional relationships between the various sectors of the population in the existing social system. Every system has its own law of fixed proportions⁹ in its demographic composition, its own "optimum" equilibrium and forms of disequilibrium which, if not redressed, by appropriate legislation, can be catastrophic in themselves in that, apart from any other disintegrative element, they dry up the sources of economic life.)

America does not have "great historical and cultural traditions"; but neither does it have this leaden burden to support. This is one of the main reasons (and certainly more important than its so-called natural wealth) for its formidable accumulation of capital which has taken place in spite of the superior living standard enjoyed by the popular classes compared with Europe. The non-existence of viscous parasitic sedimentations left behind by past phases of history has allowed industry, and commerce in particular, to develop on a sound basis. It also allows a continual reduction of the economic function of transport and trade to the level of a genuinely subaltern activity of production. Indeed, it has led to the attempt to absorb these activities into productive activity itself. Recall here the experiments conducted by Ford and to the economies made by his firm through direct management of transport and distribution of the product. These economies affected production costs and permitted higher wages and lower selling prices. Since these preliminary conditions existed, already rendered rational by historical evolution, it was relatively easy to rationalise production and labour by a skilful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production. Hegemony here is born in the factory and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries. The phenomenon of the "masses" which so struck Romier¹⁰ is nothing but

⁹ "Fixed proportions." See p. 191.

¹⁰ Lucien Romier, *Qui sera le maître, Europe ou Amérique?* Paris, 1927.

the form taken by this "rationalised" society in which the "structure" dominates the superstructures more immediately and in which the latter are also "rationalised" (simplified and reduced in number).

Rotary Clubs and Free Masonry: Rotary is a Free Masonry without the petits bourgeois and without the petit-bourgeois mentality. America has Rotary and the YMCA; Europe has Free Masonry and the Jesuits. Attempts to introduce the YMCA into Italy; help given by Italian industry to these attempts (financial aid from Agnelli and the violent reactions of the Catholics); Agnelli's attempts to absorb the *Ordine Nuovo* group¹¹ which upheld its own type of "Americanism" in a form acceptable to the workers.

In America rationalisation has determined the need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process. This elaboration is still only in its initial phase and therefore (apparently) still idyllic. It is still at the stage of psycho-physical adaptation to the new industrial structure, aimed for through high wages. Up to the present (until the 1929 crash) there has not been, except perhaps sporadically, any flowering of the "superstructure". In other words, the fundamental question of hegemony has not yet been posed. The struggle is conducted with arms taken from the old European arsenal, bastardised and therefore anachronistic compared with the development of "things." The struggle taking place in America, as described by Philip,¹² is still in defence of craft rights against "industrial liberty". In other words, it is similar to the struggle that took place in Europe in the eighteenth century, although in different conditions. American workers unions are, more than anything else, the corporate expression of the rights of qualified crafts and therefore the industrialists' attempts to curb them have a certain "progressive" aspect. The absence of the European historical phase, marked even in the economic field by the French

¹¹ Giovanni Agnelli, the "progressive" head of FIAT, made various attempts in the immediately post-war years to buy off the intense militancy of the workers and enlist support for the rationalisation and intensification of production in the FIAT works in Turin. In October 1920, after the occupation of the factories, he went so far as to put forward a scheme of co-operative management, which was decisively rejected by the workers under Communist leadership. The Communist workers, centred around the "Ordine Nuovo", had been in the forefront of the struggle setting up the Workers' Councils which took over the running of the factory during the September occupation, and it was Agnelli's hope that the Ordine Nuovo group could be won over to his own class-collaborationist version of the councils. (Gramsci's account of the Agnelli episode is to be found in *Alcuni Temi della Questione Meridionale* (1926, GF, pp. 804-809). See also the article in *Avanti!*, 5 February 1919, GF, pp. 357-359.)

¹² André Philip. *Le Problème ouvrier aux Etats-Unis*, Paris, 1929.

Revolution, has left the American popular masses in a backward state. To this should be added the absence of national homogeneity, the mixture of race-cultures, the negro question.

In Italy there have been the beginnings of a Fordist fanfare: exaltation of big cities, overall planning for the Milan conurbation, etc.; the affirmation that capitalism is only at its beginnings and that it is necessary to prepare for it grandiose patterns of development (on this see some articles by Schiavi in *La Riforma Sociale*). But afterwards came a conversion to ruralism,¹³ the disparagement of the cities typical of the Enlightenment, exaltation of the artisanat and of idyllic patriarchalism, reference to craft rights and a struggle against industrial liberty. All the same, even though the development is slow and full of understandable caution, one cannot say that the conservative side, the side that represents old European culture with all its train of parasites, has not encountered opposition. (Interesting from this point of view is the tendency represented by *Nuovi Studi* and *Critica Fascista* and by the intellectual centre for corporate studies organised at the University of Pisa.) De Man's book¹⁴ is also in its way an expression of these problems which are disturbing the old European bone-structure, but it is an expression without greatness and is unattached to any of the major historical forces which are striving for mastery of the world.

SUPER-CITY and SUPER-COUNTRY¹⁵

Excerpts from *La Fiera Letteraria* of 15 January 1928. From Giovanni Papini:¹⁶

"The city does not create, but consumes. Just as it is the emporium where congregate the goods seized from the country-

¹³ "Ruralism." A notion which became current after Mussolini's call in 1927 to "ruralise [*ruralizzare*] Italy".

¹⁴ Henri De Man. *Au delà du Marxisme*, Paris, 1924. The title "Beyond Marxism" is deceptive. As Gramsci points out, De Man's book is little more than a return to pre-Marxian humanism, with positivistic accretions and propped up by reference to the "psychological and ethical values" of the working class movement (MS, pp. 110-114. See also p. 430 of this volume and notes 74 on p. 376 and 56 on p. 160.

¹⁵ Super-City and Super Country (*Stracittà e Strapaese*). This mainly literary polemic in the 1920's opposed (among others) Massimo Bontempelli and Corrado Alvaro, on the side of urbanism and cosmopolitanism, to Curzio Malaparte, Giuseppe Ungaretti and Giovanni Papini, on the side of nationalism and ruralism. As Benjamin Crémieux pointed out at the time, these conflicting attitudes can in a sense be seen as two sides of the coin of fascist imperialism (*Panorama de la littérature italienne contemporaine*. Paris, 1928. Quoted in OC).

¹⁶ Giovanni Papini, ex-Futurist, converted to Catholicism and to a cult of austerity and simple values.

side and the mines, so it is to the city that there flow the freshest minds from the provinces and the ideas of great solitary men. The city is like a pyre which gives light because it is burning what was created far away from it and many times against it. All cities are sterile. Proportionately few children are born there, and genius almost never. In the city there is enjoyment, but no creation; there is love but no generation, consumption but no production."

Apart from the "absolute" idiocies here, one should point out that Papini has in mind the "relative" model of the city non-city, the Koblenz of the consumers of landed income and tolerated houses.¹⁷ In the same number of *La Fiera Letteraria* the following item may be read:

"Our super-country recipe has these characteristics: decisive aversion to all those forms of civilisation which are not compatible with ours or which ruin, through being indigestible, the classical gifts of the Italians. Then, guardianship of the universal sense of the country, which is, spelt out, the natural and immanent relationship between the individual and his land. Finally, exaltation of our own native characteristics in every field and activity of life, that is to say: Catholic foundation, religious sense of the world, fundamental simplicity and sobriety, closeness to reality, control of fantasy, equilibrium between spirit and matter."

(Note: how would Italy of today, the Italian nation, have come into existence without the formation and development of cities and without the unifying influence of cities. "Supercountrymanism" in the past would have meant municipalism, just as it meant popular disarray and foreign rule. And would Catholicism itself have developed if the Pope, instead of residing in Rome, had taken up residence in Scaricalasino?)¹⁸

Or take this judgment of Francesco Meriano (from *L'Assalto*, Bologna):

"In the philosophical field I claim to discover on the other hand a real antithesis, which is an antithesis more than a hundred

¹⁷ Koblenz, a city in the Rhineland, here used proverbially as a centre of parasitic consumption and legalised prostitution.

¹⁸ *Scaricalasino*, literally "unload-the-donkey", in the sense of a tiny village at the back of beyond.

years old but always reappearing in a new outward guise: between voluntarism, pragmatism and activism, identifiable in Supercity, and enlightenment, rationalism and historicism, identifiable in Supercountry."

(In other words the immortal principles have taken refuge in Supercountry.) In any case it is worth noting that the "literary" polemic between Supercountry and Supercity was nothing but the froth on top of the polemic between parasitic conservatism and the innovating tendencies of Italian society. In *La Stampa*, 4 May 1929, Mino Maccari writes:

"When Supercountry opposes modernistic importations, its opposition is aimed at preserving the right to select from them with a view to preventing harmful contacts, mixed with those which could be useful, from corrupting the integrity of the nature and character proper to Italian civilisation, quintessentialised over the ages and now yearning (!) after a unifying synthesis."

(Already "quintessentialised" but not "synthesised" and "unified" !!!)

FINANCIAL AUTARKY¹⁹ OF INDUSTRY

A noteworthy article by Carlo Pagni, *A proposito di un tentativo di teoria pura del corporativismo* (*La Riforma Sociale*, September/October 1929) examines Massimo Fovel's book *Economia e corporativismo* (Ferrara, S.A.T.E., 1929) and refers to another work of the same author *Rendita e salario nello Stato Sindacale* (Rome, 1928). But he does not realise, or does not point out explicitly, that Fovel in his writings conceives of "corporatism" as the premiss for the introduction into Italy of the most advanced American systems of production and labour. It would be interesting to know whether Fovel is writing "out of his head" or whether he has behind him specific social forces (practically speaking and not just in general) which back him and urge him on. Fovel has never been a "pure scientist", since all intellectuals, however "pure", are always expressive of certain tendencies. In many ways he belongs to the Cicotti, Naldi, Bazzi, Preziosi, etc., coterie, but he is more complex, because of his undeniable intellectual quality. Fovel has always harboured the aspiration of becoming a great political leader,²⁰ but he has never

¹⁹ Autarky: i.e. self-sufficiency, particularly in the sense of self financing.

²⁰ Leader. In English in the text.

managed it because he lacks certain basic gifts—a force of will directed to a single end and a freedom from Missiroli's type of intellectual volubility. Furthermore, he is all too often clearly connected with shady petty interests.

He began as a “young radical”²¹ before the war. He wanted to rejuvenate the traditional democratic movement by giving it a more concrete and modern content, and flirted a bit with the Republicans, especially with the federalist and regionalist trends (Oliviero Zuccarini's *Critica Politica*). During the war he was a Giolittian neutralist: in 1919 he joined the Socialist Party in Bologna, but never wrote for *Avanti!* Before the armistice he made several excursions to Turin. The Torinese industrialists had acquired the old and infamous *Gazzetta di Torino* in order to transform it and make it their own direct mouthpiece. Fovel aspired to become editor-in-chief of the new combination and was certainly in contact with industrial circles. But Tommaso Borelli, a “young liberal” was chosen instead, and was shortly succeeded by Italo Minunni of the *Idea Nazionale*. However, *La Gazzetta di Torino* did not flourish, even under the name of *Paese*, despite the sums expended on its development, and was closed down by its promoters.

A curious letter came from Fovel in 1919: he wrote that he “felt a duty” to collaborate on the weekly *Ordine Nuovo*. We sent a reply establishing the limits of any possible contribution by him, after which the “voice of duty” was suddenly silent. Fovel joined up with the Passigli, Montelli, Gardenghi crowd, which had made out of the *Lavoratore* in Trieste a pretty lucrative business affair, and which must have had contacts with the Torinese industrial world. An attempt was made by Passigli to transport *L'Ordine Nuovo* to Trieste with a “commercially” profitable management (the date can be checked against the subscription of 100 lire made by Passigli who had come to Turin for direct talks).²² The question arose of whether a “gentleman” could collaborate on *Il Lavoratore*. In 1921 certain papers belonging to Fovel and Gardenghi were found in the *Lavoratore* offices, from which it emerged that the two colleagues were speculating in cotton shares on the Stock Exchange during the strike led by the syndicalists of Nicola Vecchi, and were

²¹ The curious biographical note which follows, about the apparently insignificant figure of Massimo Fovel, is interesting for the light it throws on part of the intellectual fringe of the Italian labour movement in the period immediately following the First World War and on the facility with which certain Social Democrats and “Radicals” passed into active complicity with the socio economic manifestations of fascism.

²² Passigli's subscription is recorded in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 27 March 1920.

running the paper according to the interests of their speculations. After Livorno²³ Fovel was not heard of for some time. He reappeared in 1925, as a collaborator on *Avanti!* with Nenni²⁴ and Gardenghi, and set up a campaign in favour of the vassalage of Italian industry to American finance, a campaign which was instantly exploited (but there must have been an agreement in advance) by the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, connected with Ponti of S.I.P. [Piedmont Hydro-Electrics]. In 1925-26 Fovel was a frequent contributor to *La Voce Repubblicana*. Today (1929) he upholds corporatism as a premiss for an Italian form of Americanisation, collaborates on the *Ferrara Corriere Padano*,²⁵ on *Nuovi Studi*, *Nuovi Problemi* and *Problemi del Lavoro* and teaches (so it appears) at Ferrara University.

What would appear significant in Fovel's thesis, as summarised by Pagni, is his conception of the corporation as an autonomous industrial productive bloc destined to resolve in a modern and increasingly capitalist direction the problem of further development of the Italian economic apparatus. This is opposed to the semi-feudal and parasitic elements of society which appropriate an excessive tithe of surplus value and to the so-called "producers of savings". The production of savings should become an internal (more economical) function of the productive bloc itself, with the help of a development of production at diminishing costs which would allow, in addition to an increase of surplus value, higher salaries as well. The result of this would be a larger internal market, a certain level of working-class saving and higher profits. In this way one should get a more rapid rhythm of capital accumulation within the enterprise rather than through the intermediary of the "producers of savings" who are really nothing other than predators of surplus value. Within the industrial-productive bloc, the technical element, management and workers, should be more important than the "capitalistic" element in the petty sense of the word. The alliance of captains of industry and petit-bourgeois savers should be replaced by a bloc consisting of all the elements which are directly operative in production and which are the only ones capable of combining in a union and thus constituting the productive corporation. (Whence the extreme conclusion drawn by Spirito, of the corporation as property.)²⁶

²³ The Congress of Livorno of January 1920, at which the Communist fraction definitively split from the Socialist Party and formed the Communist Party of Italy.

²⁴ Pietro Nenni, later to become leader of the Socialist Party.

²⁵ *Corriere Padano*. The paper of Italo Balbo, one of the leaders of Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922.

²⁶ See note 120 on p. 470.

Pagni's objection to Fovel is that his treatment is not a new political economy but just a new economic policy. This is a purely formal objection, which could be important in a certain context but does not touch the core of the argument. The other objections, in concrete terms, are nothing other than the observation that there exist various aspects of the Italian situation which are backward in relation to the "organisational" upheaval of the economic machine. Fovel's greatest weaknesses consist in his having neglected the economic function which the state has always had in Italy because of the diffident attitude of small savers towards the industrialists, and in having neglected the fact that the corporative trend did not originate from the need for changes in the technical conditions of industry, or even from that of a new economic policy, but rather from the need for economic policing, a need which was aggravated by the 1929 crisis which is still going on.

In reality skilled workers in Italy have never, as individuals or through union organisations, actively or passively opposed innovations leading towards lowering of costs, rationalisation of work or the introduction of more perfect forms of automation and more perfect technical organisation of the complex of the enterprise. On the contrary. However, this has happened in America and has resulted in the semi-liquidation of the free trade unions and their replacement by a system of mutually isolated factory-based workers' organisations. In Italy on the other hand even the slightest and most cautious attempt to make the factory the centre of the trade union organisation (recall the question of the "shop stewards")²⁷ has been bitterly contested and resolutely crushed. A careful analysis of Italian history before 1922, or even up to 1926, which does not allow itself to be distracted by external trappings but manages to seize on the essential moments of the working-class struggle, must objectively come to the conclusion that it was precisely the workers who brought into being newer and more modern industrial requirements and in their own way upheld these strenuously. It could also be said that some industrialists understood this movement and tried to appropriate it to themselves. This explains Agnelli's attempt to absorb the *Ordine Nuovo* and its school into the FIAT complex and thus to institute a school of workers and technicians qualified for industrial change and for work with "rationalised" systems. The YMCA tried to open courses of abstract "Americanism", but despite all the money spent they were not a success.

²⁷ "fiduciari d'azienda."

The considerations apart, a further series of questions is raised. The corporative movement exists. It is also true that in some ways the juridical changes which have already taken place have created the formal conditions within which major technical-economic change can happen on a large scale, because the workers are not in a position either to oppose it or to struggle to become themselves the standard-bearers of the movement. Corporative organisation could become the form of the new change, but one asks oneself: shall we experience one of Vico's "ruses of providence"²⁸ in which men, without either proposing or willing it, are forced to obey the imperatives of history? For the moment one is more inclined to be dubious. The negative element of "economic policing" has so far had the upper hand over the positive element represented by the requirements of a new economic policy which can renovate, by modernising it, the socio-economic structure of the nation while remaining within the framework of the old industrialism.

The juridical form possible is one of the conditions required, but not the only one or even the most important: it is only the most important of the immediate conditions. Americanisation requires a particular environment, a particular social structure (or at least a determined intention to create it) and a certain type of State. This State is the liberal State, not in the sense of free-trade liberalism or of effective political liberty, but in the more fundamental sense of free initiative and of economic individualism which, with its own means, on the level of "civil society", through historical development, itself arrives at a régime of industrial concentration and monopoly. The disappearance of the semi-feudal type of *rentier* is in Italy one of the major conditions of an industrial revolution (and, in part, the revolution itself) and not a consequence. The economic and financial policy of the state is the instrument of their disappearance through the amortisation of the national debt, compulsory registration of shares, and by giving a greater weight to direct rather than indirect taxation in the governmental budget. But it does not seem that this has been or is going to become the trend of financial policy. Indeed, the State is creating new *rentiers*, that is to say it is promoting the old forms of parasitic accumulation of savings and tending to create closed social forma-

²⁸ "*astuzie della Prowvidenza*." In Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, Divine Providence, which is conceived as an immanent rather than a transcendental force and is broadly identifiable with Reason or History in later idealist writers, is seen as capable of overriding the contingent vagaries of human wills and redirecting the path of history by covert means. But see also note 103 on p. 108.

tions. In reality the corporative trend has operated to shore up crumbling positions of the middle classes and not to eliminate them, and is becoming, because of the vested interests that arise from the old foundations, more and more a machinery to preserve the existing order just as it is rather than a propulsive force. Why is this? Because the corporative trend is also dependent on unemployment. It defends for the employed a certain minimum standard which, if there were free competition, would likewise collapse and thus provoke serious social disturbances; and it creates new forms of employment, organisational and not productive, for the unemployed of the middle classes. But there still remains a way out: the corporative trend, born in strict dependence on such a delicate situation whose essential equilibrium must at all costs be maintained if monstrous catastrophe is to be averted, could yet manage to proceed by very slow and almost imperceptible stages to modify the social structure without violent shocks: even the most tightly swathed baby manages nevertheless to develop and grow. This is why it would be interesting to know whether Fovel is speaking just for himself or whether he is the representative of economic forces which are looking for a way forward at all costs. In any case, the process would be so long and encounter so many difficulties that new interests could grow up in the meanwhile and once again oppose its development so tenaciously as to crush it entirely.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE SEXUAL QUESTION

Obsession with the sexual question and dangers of that obsession. All the promoters of "blueprints" for society²⁹ put the sexual question in the forefront and resolve it "frankly".

It is worth noting that in "Utopias" the sexual question plays a large and often dominant part. (Croce's observation that Campanella's solutions in *La Città del Sole*³⁰ are inexplicable in terms of the sexual needs of Calabrian peasants is just inept.) Sexual instincts are those that have undergone the greatest degree of repression from society in the course of its development. "Regulation" of sexual instincts, because of the contradictions it creates and the perversions that are attributed to it, seems particularly "unnatural". Hence the frequency of appeals to "nature" in this area. "Psycho-analytical"

²⁹ "progettisti."

³⁰ Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), heretical Dominican monk, was the author of a famous early Utopia, *La Città del Sole* (The City of the Sun), which put forward a theocratic-communistic ideal of social organisation including a form of sexual communism.

literature is also a kind of criticism of the regulation of sexual instincts in a form which often recalls the Enlightenment, as in its creation of a new myth of the "savage" on a sexual basis (including relations between parents and children).

There is a split, in this field, between city and country, but with no idyllic bias in favour of the country, where the most frequent and the most monstrous sexual crimes take place and where bestiality and sodomy are widespread. In the parliamentary enquiry on the South in 1911 it is stated that in Abruzzo and the Basilicata, which are the regions where there is most religious fanaticism and patriarchalism and the least influence of urban ideas (to such an extent that, according to Serpieri, in the years 1919-20 there was not even any peasant unrest in those areas) there is incest in 30 per cent of families. And it does not appear that the situation has changed since then.

Sexuality as reproductive function and as sport: The "aesthetic" ideal of woman oscillates between the conceptions of "brood mare" and of "dolly". But it is not only in the cities that sexuality has become a "sport". The popular proverbs, "man is a hunter, woman a temptress", "the man who has no choice goes to bed with his wife", etc., show how widespread the conception of sex as sport is even in the countryside and in sexual relations between members of the same class.

The economic function of reproduction. This is not only a general fact which concerns the whole of society in its totality, because society demands a certain proportion between age-groups for purposes of production and of supporting the section of the population that for normal reasons (age, illness, etc.) is passive. It is also a "molecular" fact which operates within the smallest economic units, such as the family. The expression about the "staff of old age" demonstrates an instinctive consciousness of the economic need for there to be a certain ratio of young to old over the entire area of society. The sight of the maltreatment meted out in country villages to old people without a family encourages couples to want to have children. (The proverb to the effect that "a mother may raise a hundred sons, but a hundred sons do not support a mother", shows another side to this question.) Among the people old men without children are treated in the same way as bastards. Medical advance, which has raised the average expectancy of human life, is making the sexual question increasingly important as a fundamental and autonomous aspect of the economic, and this sexual aspect raises, in its turn, complex problems of a "superstructural"

order. The increase of life-expectancy in France, where the birth-rate is low and where there is a rich and complex productive apparatus to be kept going, has already given rise to a number of problems connected with the national question. The older generations are finding themselves in an increasingly abnormal relationship with the younger generations of the same national culture, and the working masses are being swollen by immigrant elements from abroad which modify the base. The same phenomenon is happening there as in America, that of a certain division of labour, with the native population occupying the qualified trades and, of course, the functions of direction and organisation, and the immigrants the unskilled work.

In a number of states a similar relationship, with important negative economic consequences, exists between industrial cities with a low birth-rate and a prolific countryside. Life in industry demands a general apprenticeship, a process of psycho-physical adaptation to specific conditions of work, nutrition, housing, customs, etc. This is not something "natural" or innate, but has to be acquired, and the urban characteristics thus acquired are passed on by heredity or rather are absorbed in the development of childhood and adolescence. As a result the low birth-rate in the cities imposes the need for continual massive expenditure on the training of a continual flow of new arrivals in the city and brings with it a continual change in the socio-political composition of the city, thus continually changing the terrain on which the problem of hegemony is to be posed.

The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics and caution must be exercised in proposals for new legislation. Every crisis brought about by unilateral coercion in the sexual field unleashes a "romantic" reaction which could be aggravated by the abolition of organised legal prostitution. All these factors make any form of regulation of sex and any attempt to create a new sexual ethic suited to the new methods of production and work extremely complicated and difficult. However, it is still necessary to attempt this regulation and to attempt to create a new ethic. It is worth drawing attention to the way in which industrialists (Ford in particular) have been concerned with the sexual affairs of their employees and with their

family arrangements in general. One should not be misled, any more than in the case of prohibition, by the "puritanical" appearance assumed by this concern. The truth is that the new type of man demanded by the rationalisation of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalised.

FEMINISM AND "MASCULINISM"

From the review which A. De Pietri Tonelli has published in the *Rivista di politica economica* (February 1930) of the book by Anthony M. Ludovici, *Woman. A Vindication* (2nd edition, London, 1921):

"When things are going badly in the social structure of a nation because of the decadence of the fundamental capacities of its men", Ludovici claims, "two distinct tendencies seem always to assert themselves: on the one hand to interpret as symptoms of progress changes which are purely and simply signs of decadence and ruin of old and healthy (!) institutions; and the second, which is due to a justified loss of confidence in the governing class, is to give to everyone, whether or not they have the qualities required, the certainty of being chosen to make an effort in the direction of putting things right".

(The translation is manifestly uncertain and inaccurate.)³¹

The author regards feminism as an expression of the second tendency and demands a resurgence of "masculinism". Apart from any other considerations on the subject, difficult to make because the text printed by De Pietri Tonelli is so uncertain, this anti-feminist and "masculinist" tendency is worth drawing attention to. One should also study the origins of the legislation in the Anglo-Saxon countries³² which is so favourable to women in a

³¹ Anthony Mario Ludovici, *Woman. A Vindication*, London, 1923. We have been unable to trace any corresponding passage in the original, and have simply retranslated the "manifestly uncertain and inaccurate Italian". The anti-feminist, anti-democratic tone of the passage is however quite typical of the author, amateur sexologist and translator of Nietzsche.

³² Exactly what legislation Gramsci had in mind here is uncertain, but it is worth pointing out that in both England and America legislation in regard to divorce and custody of the children of separated parents was far in advance of that in Italy. The "unhealthy 'feministic' deviations" referred to immediately below would seem to be connected with an upper-class American phenomenon of sexual liberation achieved on the basis of economic independence obtained through a favourable divorce settlement.

whole series of questions relating to "sentimental" or pseudo-sentimental conflicts. This represents an attempt to regulate the sexual question, and to treat it seriously, but it doesn't seem to have accomplished its purpose. It has made way for unhealthy "feministic" deviations in the worst sense of the word, and has created for women (of the upper classes) a paradoxical social position.

"ANIMALITY" AND INDUSTRIALISM

The history of industrialism has always been a continuing struggle (which today takes an even more marked and vigorous form) against the element of "animality" in man. It has been an uninterrupted, often painful and bloody process of subjugating natural (i.e. animal and primitive) instincts to new, more complex and rigid norms and habits of order, exactitude and precision which can make possible the increasingly complex forms of collective life which are the necessary consequence of industrial development. This struggle is imposed from outside, and the results to date, though they have great immediate practical value, are to a large extent purely mechanical: the new habits have not yet become "second nature". But has not every new way of life, in the period in which it was forced to struggle against the old, always been for a certain time a result of mechanical repression? Even the instincts which have to be overcome today because they are too "animal" are really a considerable advance on earlier, even more primitive instincts. Who could describe the "cost" in human lives and in the grievous subjugation of instinct involved in the passage from nomadism to a settled agricultural existence? The process includes the first forms of rural serfdom and trade bondage, etc. Up to now all changes in modes of existence and modes of life have taken place through brute coercion, that is to say through the dominion of one social group over all the productive forces of society. The selection or "education" of men adapted to the new forms of civilisation and to the new forms of production and work has taken place by means of incredible acts of brutality which have cast the weak and the non-conforming into the limbo of the lumpen-classes or have eliminated them entirely.

With the appearance of new types of civilisation, or in the course of their development, there have always been crises. But who has been involved in these crises? Not so much the working masses as the middle classes and a part even of the ruling class which had

undergone the process of coercion which was necessarily being exercised over the whole area of society. Crises of *libertinism* have been many, and there has been one in every historical epoch.

When the pressure of coercion is exercised over the whole complex of society (and this has taken place in particular since the fall of slavery and the coming of Christianity) puritan ideologies develop which give an external form of persuasion and consent to the intrinsic use of force. But once the result has been achieved, if only to a degree, the pressure is fragmented. Historically this fragmentation has assumed many different forms, which is to be expected, since the pressure itself has always taken original and often personal forms—it has been identified with a religious movement, it has created an apparatus of its own incarnated in particular strata or castes, it has taken the name of a Cromwell or a Louis XV as the case may be. It is at this point that the crisis of libertinism ensues. The French crisis following the death of Louis XV, for example, cannot be compared with the crisis in America following the appearance of Roosevelt, nor does prohibition, with its consequent gangsterism, etc., have any parallel in preceding epochs. But the crisis does not affect the working masses except in a superficial manner, or it can affect them indirectly, in that it depraves their women folk. These masses have either acquired the habits and customs necessary for the new systems of living and working, or else they continue to be subject to coercive pressure through the elementary necessities of their existence. Opposition to prohibition was not wanted by the workers, and the corruption brought about by bootlegging and gangsterism was widespread amongst the upper classes.

In the post-war period there has been a crisis of morals of unique proportions, but it took place in opposition to a form of coercion which had not been imposed in order to create habits suited to forms of work but arose from the necessities, admitted as transitory, of wartime life and life in the trenches. This pressure involved a particular repression of sexual instincts, even the most normal, among great masses of young people, and the crisis which broke out with the return to normal life was made even more violent by the disappearance of so many young men and by a permanent disequilibrium in the numerical proportions of individuals of the two sexes. The institutions connected with sexual life were profoundly shaken and new forms of enlightened utopias developed around the sexual question. The crisis was made even more violent, and still is, by the fact that it affected all strata of the population

and came into conflict with the necessities of the new methods of work which were meanwhile beginning to impose themselves. (Taylorism and rationalisation in general.) These new methods demand a rigorous discipline of the sexual instincts (at the level of the nervous system) and with it a strengthening of the "family" in the wide sense (rather than a particular form of the familial system) and of the regulation and stability of sexual relations.

It is worth insisting on the fact that in the sexual field the most depraving and "regressive" ideological factor is the enlightened and libertarian conception proper to those classes which are not tightly bound to productive work and spread by them among the working classes. This element becomes particularly serious in a state where the working masses are no longer subject to coercive pressure from a superior class and where the new methods of production and work have to be acquired by means of reciprocal persuasion and by convictions proposed and accepted by each individual. A two-fold situation can then create itself in which there is an inherent conflict between the "verbal" ideology which recognises the new necessities and the real "animal" practice which prevents physical bodies from effectively acquiring the new attitudes. In this case one gets the formation of what can be called a situation of totalitarian social hypocrisy. Why totalitarian? In other situations the popular strata are compelled to practise "virtue". Those who preach it do not practice it, although they pay it verbal homage.³³ The hypocrisy is therefore a question of strata: it is not total. This is a situation which cannot last, and is certain to lead to a crisis of libertinism, but only when the masses have already assimilated "virtue" in the form of more or less permanent habits, that is with ever-decreasing oscillations. On the other hand, in the case where no coercive pressure is exercised by a superior class, "virtue" is affirmed in generic terms but is not practised either through conviction or through coercion, with the result that the psychophysical attitudes necessary for the new methods of work are not acquired. The crisis can become "permanent"—that is, potentially catastrophic—since it can be resolved only by coercion. This coercion is a new type, in that it is exercised by the *élite* of a class over the rest of that same class. It can also only be self-coercion and therefore self-discipline (like Alfieri tying himself to the chair).³⁴

³³ Cf. the famous "Maxim" of La Rochefoucauld (n. CCXVIII): "hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue".

³⁴ Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803), the Italian poet and dramatist, recounts in his autobiography (V. Alfieri, *Vita*, Epoca Terza, cap. XV) how in his determina-

In any case in the sphere of sexual relations what can be opposed to this function of the *élites* is the enlightened and libertarian mentality. The struggle against the libertarian conception means therefore precisely creating the *élites* necessary for the historical task, or at least developing them so that their function is extended to cover all spheres of human activity.

RATIONALISATION OF PRODUCTION AND WORK

The tendency represented by Lev Davidovitch [Trotsky] was closely connected to this series of problems, a fact which does not seem to me to have been fully brought out. Its essential content, from this point of view, consisted in an "over"-resolute (and therefore not rationalised) will to give supremacy in national life to industry and industrial methods, to accelerate, through coercion imposed from the outside, the growth of discipline and order in production, and to adapt customs to the necessities of work. Given the general way in which all the problems connected with this tendency were conceived, it was destined necessarily to end up in a form of Bonapartism. Hence the inexorable necessity of crushing it. The preoccupations were correct, but the practical solutions were profoundly mistaken, and in this imbalance between theory and practice there was an inherent danger—the same danger, incidentally, which had manifested itself earlier, in 1921. The principle of coercion, direct or indirect, in the ordering of production and work, is correct: but the form which it assumed was mistaken. The military model had become a pernicious prejudice and the militarisation of labour was a failure.³⁵

tion to stop wasting his life and dedicate himself wholeheartedly to poetry he used to get his servant Elia to tie him to a chair at his desk, thus giving him no choice but to carry on working.

³⁵ The militarisation of labour was a labour policy which operated for a short time in the Soviet Union during the period of War Communism. Adopted at the IXth Party Congress in 1920, it met with growing opposition from the Trades Unions particularly after the end of the Civil War. It was most closely associated with the figure of Trotsky who, at the IXth Congress, put the policy in these terms:

"Militarisation is unthinkable without the militarisation of the Trades Unions as such, without the establishment of a régime in which every worker feels himself a soldier of labour, who cannot dispose of himself freely; if the order is given to transfer him, he must carry it out; if he does not carry it out, he will be a deserter who is punished. Who looks after this? The Trade Union. It creates the new régime. This is the militarisation of the working class."

The policy was implicitly defeated, with the rejection of the Trotsky Bukharin theses on the Trades Unions, at the Xth Congress in 1921. The adoption of the

Interest of Lev Davidovitch in Americanism. He wrote articles, researched into the "byt" [BBIT= mode of living] and into literature. These activities were less disconnected than might appear, since the new methods of work are inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life. One cannot have success in one field without tangible results in the other. In America rationalisation of work and prohibition are undoubtedly connected. The enquiries conducted by the industrialists into the workers' private lives and the inspection services created by some firms to control the "morality" of their workers are necessities of the new methods of work. People who laugh at these initiatives (failures though they were) and see in them only a hypocritical manifestation of "puritanism" thereby deny themselves any possibility of understanding the importance, significance and objective import of the American phenomenon, which is *also* the biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and of man. The expression "consciousness of purpose" might appear humorous to say the least to anyone who recalls Taylor's phrase about the "trained gorilla".³⁶ Taylor is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American society—developing in the worker to the highest degree automatic and mechanical attitudes, breaking up the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy and initiative on the part of the worker, and reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect. But these things, in reality, are not original or novel: they represent simply the most recent phase of a long process which began with industrialism itself. This phase is more intense than preceding phases, and manifests itself in more brutal forms, but it is a phase which will itself be superseded by the creation of a

New Economic Policy rendered the methods of War Communism redundant. However, it has been argued that a close resemblance can be found between the "militarisation of labour" and the labour policy of the period of the Five Year Plans.

³⁶ This phrase, whose revealing "tactlessness" instantly attracted the attention of commentators, occurs on p. 40 of Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), where the author writes: "This work [pig-iron handling] is so crude and elementary in its nature that the writer firmly believes that it would be possible to train an intelligent gorilla so as to become a more efficient pig-iron handler than any man could be." Frederick Taylor (1856–1915) was an American engineer and pioneer of scientific management.

For Gramsci's analysis of the significance of "Taylorism", see also pp. 308–10 below and Introduction to this Section, pp. 277–8.

psycho-physical nexus of a new type, both different from its predecessors and undoubtedly *superior*. A forced selection will inevitably take place; a part of the old working class will be pitilessly eliminated from the world of labour, and perhaps from the world *tout court*.

It is from this point of view that one should study the "puritanical" initiative of American industrialists like Ford. It is certain that they are not concerned with the "humanity" or the "spirituality" of the worker, which are immediately smashed. This "humanity and spirituality" cannot be realised except in the world of production and work and in productive "creation". They exist most in the artisan, in the "demiurge",³⁷ when the worker's personality was reflected whole in the object created and when the link between art and labour was still very strong. But it is precisely against this "humanism" that the new industrialism is fighting. "Puritanical" initiatives simply have the purpose of preserving, outside of work, a certain psycho-physical equilibrium which prevents the physiological collapse of the worker, exhausted by the new method of production. This equilibrium can only be something purely external and mechanical, but it can become internalised if it is proposed by the worker himself, and not imposed from the outside, if it is proposed by a new form of society, with appropriate and original methods. American industrialists are concerned to maintain the continuity of the physical and muscular-nervous efficiency of the worker. It is in their interests to have a stable, skilled labour force, a permanently well-adjusted complex, because the human complex (the collective worker) of an enterprise is also a machine which cannot, without considerable loss, be taken to pieces too often and renewed with single new parts.

The element of so-called high wages also depends on this necessity. It is the instrument used to select and maintain in stability a skilled labour force suited to the system of production and work. But high wages are a double-edged weapon. It is necessary for the worker to spend his extra money "rationally" to maintain, renew and, if possible, increase his muscular-nervous efficiency and not to corrode or destroy it. Thus the struggle against alcohol, the most dangerous agent of destruction of labouring power, becomes a function of the state. It is possible for other "puritanical" struggles as well to become functions of the state if the private initiative of the industrialists proves insufficient or if a moral crisis breaks out among the

³⁷ "demiurge": from the Greek, meaning a handicraftsman, but with the extended sense, in Platonic philosophy, of "creator of the world".

working masses which is too profound and too widespread, as might happen as a result of a long and widespread crisis of unemployment.

The sexual question is again connected with that of alcohol. Abuse and irregularity of sexual functions is, after alcoholism, the most dangerous enemy of nervous energies, and it is commonly observed that "obsessional" work provokes alcoholic and sexual depravation. The attempts made by Ford, with the aid of a body of inspectors, to intervene in the private lives of his employees and to control how they spent their wages and how they lived is an indication of these tendencies. Though these tendencies are still only "private" or only latent, they could become, at a certain point, state ideology, inserting themselves into traditional puritanism and presenting themselves as a renaissance of the pioneer morality and as the "true" America (etc.). The most noteworthy fact in the American phenomenon in relation to these manifestations is the gap which has been formed and is likely to be increasingly accentuated, between the morality and way of life of the workers and those of other strata of the population.

Prohibition has already given an example of this gap. Who drank the alcohol brought into the United States by the bootleggers? Alcohol became a luxury product and even the highest wages were not enough to enable it to be consumed by large strata of the working masses. Someone who works for a wage, with fixed hours, does not have time to dedicate himself to the pursuit of drink or to sport or evading the law. The same observation can be made about sexuality. "Womanising" demands too much leisure. The new type of worker will be a repetition, in a different form, of peasants in the villages. The relative stability of sexual unions among the peasants is closely linked to the system of work in the country. The peasant who returns home in the evening after a long and hard day's work wants the "*venerem facilem parabilemque*"³⁸ of Horace. It is not his style. He loves his own woman, sure and unfailing, who is free from affectation and doesn't play little games about being seduced or raped in order to be possessed. It might seem that in this way the sexual function has been mechanised, but in reality we are dealing with the growth of a new form of sexual union shorn of the bright and dazzling colour of the romantic tinsel typical of the petit bourgeois and the Bohemian layabout. It seems clear that the new industrialism wants monogamy: it wants the man as worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly

³⁸ "Easy and accessible love." Cf. Horace, *Satires*, I, ii, 119, ". . . namque parabilem amo venerem facilemque".

and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction. The employee who goes to work after a night of "excess" is no good for his work. The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of productive motions connected with the most perfected automatism. This complex of direct and indirect repression and coercion exercised on the masses will undoubtedly produce results and a new form of sexual union will emerge whose fundamental characteristic would apparently have to be monogamy and relative stability.

It would be interesting to know the statistical occurrence of deviation from the sexual behaviour officially propagandised in the United States, broken down according to social group.

It will show that in general divorce is particularly frequent among the upper classes. This demonstrates the moral gap in the United States between the working masses and the ever more numerous elements of the ruling classes. This moral gap seems to me one of the most interesting phenomena and one which is most rich in consequences. Until recently the American people was a working people. The "vocation of work" was not a trait inherent only in the working class but it was a specific quality of the ruling classes as well. The fact that a millionaire continued to be practically active until forced to retire by age or illness and that his activity occupied a very considerable part of his day, is a typically American phenomenon. This, for the average European, is the weirdest American extravagance. We have noted above that this difference between Americans and Europeans is determined by the absence of "tradition" in the United States, in so far as tradition also means passive residues of all the social forms eclipsed by past history. In the United States, on the other hand, there is a recent "tradition" of the pioneers, the tradition of strong individual personalities in whom the vocation of work had reached its greatest intensity and strength, men who entered directly, not by means of some army of servants and slaves, into energetic contact with the forces of nature in order to dominate them and exploit them victoriously. In Europe it is the passive residues that resist Americanism (they "represent quality", etc.) because they have the instinctive feeling that the new forms of production and work would sweep them away implacably. But if it is true that in Europe the old but still unburied residues are due to be definitively destroyed, what is beginning to happen in America itself? The moral gap mentioned above shows that ever wider margins of social passivity are in the process of being created. It would appear that women have a particularly

important role here. The male industrialist continues to work even if he is a millionaire, but his wife and daughters are turning, more and more, into "luxury mammals". Beauty competitions, competitions for new film actresses (recall the 30,000 Italian girls who sent photographs of themselves in bathing costumes to Fox in 1926), the theatre, etc., all of which select the feminine beauty of the world and put it up for auction, stimulate the mental attitudes of prostitution, and "white slaving" is practised quite legally among the upper classes. The women, with nothing to do, travel; they are continually crossing the ocean to come to Europe, escaping prohibition in their own country and contracting "marriages" for a season. (It is worth recalling that ship's captains in the United States have been deprived of their right to celebrate marriages on board ship, since so many couples get married on leaving Europe and divorced again before disembarking in America.) Prostitution in a real sense is spreading, in a form barely disguised by fragile legal formulae.

These phenomena proper to the upper classes will make more difficult any coercion on the working masses to make them conform to the needs of the new industry. In any case they are determining a psychological split and accelerating the crystallisation and saturation of the various social groups, thereby making evident the way that these groups are being transformed into castes just as they have been in Europe.

TAYLOR AND AMERICANISM

Eugenio Giovannetti has written an article in *Pegasos*, May 1929, on Frederick Taylor and Americanism, in which he says:

"Literary energy, abstract and nourished on the rhetoric of generalisation, is no longer in a position to understand technical energy, which is increasingly sharp and individual, a highly original fabric of singular will and specialised education. The literature of energy is still at the stage of its Prometheus Unbound—far too facile an image. The hero of technical civilisation is not a man unchained: he is a man of silence, who can carry his iron chains up to the heavens. He is not an ignorant fool whiling away his time: he is a man of study in the finest classical sense, in that *studium* used to mean '*punta viva*'.³⁹ While technical

³⁹ "*punta viva*." The expression is obscure. What is probably meant is concentration and enthusiasm, which is the original etymological meaning of *studium*.

or mechanistic civilisation, whichever you prefer, is silently elaborating its new type of incisive hero, the literary cult of energy only succeeds in creating an airy-fairy good-for-nothing, a breathless fool reaching after the clouds."

It is worth pointing out that no attempt has been made to apply to Americanism Gentile's little formula about "philosophy which is not expressed in verbal formulations, but is affirmed in action". This fact is instructive and significant, because if the formula has any value at all, it is precisely in Americanism that it finds its justification. On the contrary, in any discussion of Americanism it is claimed that it is "mechanicist", crude, brutal—"pure action" in other words—and it is contrasted with tradition, etc. But why is this tradition not taken up as the basis of a philosophy or as the verbally formulated philosophy of those movements for which, conversely, "philosophy is affirmed in action"? This contradiction can explain many things: for example, the difference between real action on the one hand, which modifies in an essential way both man and external reality (in other words, real culture) and which is Americanism, and on the other hand the gladiatorial futility which is self-declared action but modifies only the word, not things, the external gesture and not the man inside. The former is creating a future which is intrinsic to its objective activity and which it prefers to keep quiet about. The second only creates a superior kind of puppet, modelled on a basis of rhetorical predicates, which will collapse into nothingness the moment the strings are cut which give from outside the appearance of motion and of life.

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

In the world of production these words mean nothing more than "inexpensive" and "expensive"—i.e. satisfaction or failure to satisfy the basic needs of the popular classes and a tendency respectively to raise or to lower their standard of living. All the rest is just an ideological serial story, of which Guglielmo Ferrero has written the first episode. In a nation-enterprise which has at its disposal a large labour force and a small amount of raw materials (which is a dubious hypothesis, since every nation-enterprise can "create" its own raw materials) the term "quality" simply means the intention of employing a lot of labour on a little material, perfecting the product to the maximum. In other words, it means specialisation for a luxury market. But is this possible for an entire, very populous

nation? Where plenty of raw materials exist both alternatives are possible, the qualitative and the quantitative, but the same does not hold good for the so-called poor countries. Quantitative production can also be qualitative, in the sense that it can compete with purely qualitative industry at least among that part of the class of consumers of "distinct" objects which is not traditionalistic because it is a recent formation.

These observations are valid if one accepts the commonly put forward criterion of "quality", which is not however a rational criterion. In reality one should speak of quality only for works of art which are individual and not susceptible of reproduction. Everything that is susceptible of reproduction belongs to the realm of quantity, and can be mass produced.

One can further observe this: if a nation specialises in "qualitative" production, what industry provides the consumer goods for the poorer classes? Does this mean promoting a system of international division of labour? The whole thing is nothing more than a formula for idle men of letters and for politicians whose demagoguery consists in building castles in the air. Quality should be attributed to men, not to things; and human quality is raised and refined to the extent that man can satisfy a greater number of needs and thus make himself independent of them. The high price of bread, due to a desire to keep a greater quantity of people tied to a specific activity, leads to malnutrition. A policy of quality almost always determines its opposite: dis-qualified quantity.

TAYLORISM AND THE MECHANISATION OF THE WORKER

Taylorism supposedly produces a gap between manual labour and the "human content" of work. On this subject some useful observations can be made on the basis of past history and specifically of those professions thought of as amongst the most intellectual, that is to say the professions connected with the reproduction of texts for publication or other forms of diffusion and transmission: the scribes of the days before the invention of printing, compositors on hand presses, linotype operators, stenographers and typists. If one thinks about it, it is clear that in these trades the process of adaptation to mechanisation is more difficult than elsewhere. Why? Because it is so hard to reach the height of professional qualification when this requires of the worker that he should "forget" or not think about the intellectual content of the text he is reproducing: this in order to be able, if he is a scribe, to fix his attention exclusively

on the calligraphic form of the single letters; or to be able to break down phrases into "abstract" words and then words into characters, and rapidly select the pieces of lead in the cases; or to be able to break down not single words but groups of words, in the context of discourse, and group them mechanically into shorthand notation; or to acquire speed in typing, etc. The worker's interest in the intellectual content of the text can be measured from his mistakes. In other words, it is a professional failing. Conversely his qualification is commensurate with his lack of intellectual interest, i.e. the extent to which he has become "mechanised". The mediaeval copyist who was interested in the text changed the spelling, the morphology and the syntax of the text he was copying; he missed out entire passages which because of his meagre culture he could not understand; the train of thoughts aroused in his mind by his interest in the text led him to interpolate glosses and observations; if his language or dialect was different from that of the text he would introduce nuances deriving from his own speech: he was a bad scribe because in reality he was "remaking" the text. The slow speed of the art of writing in the Middle Ages explains many of these weaknesses: there was too much time in which to reflect, and consequently "mechanisation" was more difficult. The compositor has to be much quicker; he has to keep his hands and eyes constantly in movement, and this makes his mechanisation easier. But if one really thinks about it, the effort that these workers have to make in order to isolate from the often fascinating intellectual content of a text (and the more fascinating it is the less work is done and the less well) its written symbolisation, this perhaps is the greatest effort that can be required in any trade. However it is done, and it is not the spiritual death of man. Once the process of adaptation has been completed, what really happens is that the brain of the worker, far from being mummified, reaches a state of complete freedom. The only thing that is completely mechanised is the physical gesture; the memory of the trade, reduced to simple gestures repeated at an intense rhythm, "nestles" in the muscular and nervous centres and leaves the brain free and unencumbered for other occupations. One can walk without having to think about all the movements needed in order to move, in perfect synchronisation, all the parts of the body, in the specific way that is necessary for walking. The same thing happens and will go on happening in industry with the basic gestures of the trade. One walks automatically, and at the same time thinks about whatever one chooses. American industrialists have understood all too well this dialectic

inherent in the new industrial methods. They have understood that "trained gorilla" is just a phrase, that "unfortunately" the worker remains a man and even that during his work he thinks more, or at least has greater opportunities for thinking, once he has overcome the crisis of adaptation without being eliminated: and not only does the worker think, but the fact that he gets no immediate satisfaction from his work and realises that they are trying to reduce him to a trained gorilla, can lead him into a train of thought that is far from conformist. That the industrialists are concerned about such things is made clear from a whole series of cautionary measures and "educative" initiatives which are well brought out in Ford's books and the work of Philip.⁴⁰

HIGH WAGES

It is an obvious reflection that so-called high wages are a transitory form of remuneration. Adaptation to the new methods of production and work cannot take place simply through social compulsion. This is a "prejudice" which is widespread in Europe and even more so in Japan, which cannot fail before long to have serious consequences for the physical and psychic health of the workers. It is, furthermore, a prejudice which has its roots only in the endemic unemployment which has been a feature of the post-war period. If the situation were "normal", the apparatus of coercion needed to obtain the desired result would involve more than just high wages. Coercion has therefore to be ingeniously combined with persuasion and consent. This effect can be achieved, in forms proper to the society in question, by higher remuneration such as to permit a particular living standard which can maintain and restore the strength that has been worn down by the new form of toil. But no sooner have the new methods of work and production been generalised and diffused, the new type of worker been created universally and the apparatus of material production further perfected, no sooner has this happened than the excessive "turnover" has automatically to be restricted by widespread unemployment, and high wages disappear. In reality American high-wage industry is still exploiting a monopoly granted to it by

⁴⁰ Henry Ford (with Samuel Crowther), *My Life and Work*, Garden City and London, 1922: and *Today and Tomorrow*, Garden City. André Philip, *Le Problème ouvrier*, cit.

The "educative initiatives" referred to are presumably institutions like the Henry Ford Trade School, created in 1916 for the further education of workers.

the fact that it has the initiative with the new methods. Monopoly wages correspond to monopoly profits. But the monopoly will necessarily be first limited and then destroyed by the further diffusion of the new methods both within the United States and abroad (compare the Japanese phenomenon of low-priced goods), and high wages will disappear along with enormous profits. Also it is well known that high wages are of necessity connected with a labour aristocracy and are not granted to all American workers.

The whole Fordian ideology of high wages is a phenomenon derived from an objective necessity of modern industry when it has reached a certain stage of development. It is not a primary phenomenon—which does not however exonerate one from studying its importance and the repercussions that the ideology can have on its own account. Meanwhile, what is meant by “high wages”? Are the wages paid by Ford high only in relation to the average American wage? Or are they high as a price to be paid for the labouring power expended by Ford’s employees in production and with those methods of work? It doesn’t seem that any systematic research has been done on this, but that alone could provide a conclusive answer. The research is difficult, but the reasons why it is difficult are in themselves an indirect answer to the problem. The answer is difficult because the skilled labour force at Ford is extremely unstable and as a result it is not possible to establish an average for “rational” turnover among Ford workers for the purpose of comparison with the average in other industries. But why is it unstable? Why on earth should a worker prefer lower wages than those paid by Ford? Does this not mean that the so-called “high wages” are less capable of reconstituting the labour power expended than the lower wages paid by other firms? The instability of the labour force demonstrates that as far as Ford’s is concerned the normal conditions of workers’ competition for jobs (wage differentials) are effective only to a limited degree. The different level of average wages is not effective, nor is the pressure of the reserve army of the unemployed. This means that in dealing with Ford a new element must be looked for, and this new element will be the origin both of the high wages and of the other phenomena referred to (instability, etc.). The new element must be looked for in this fact alone: that Ford’s industry requires a discrimination, a qualification, in its workers, which other industries do not yet call for, a new type of qualification, a form of consumption of labour power and a quantity of power consumed in average hours which are the same numerically but which are more wearying and exhausting

than elsewhere and which, in the given conditions of society as it is, the wages are not sufficient to recompense and make up for.

Once these reasons have been established, the problem arises: whether the type of industry and organisation of work and production typical of Ford is rational; whether, that is, it can and should be generalised, or whether, on the other hand, we are not dealing with a malignant phenomenon which must be fought against through trade-union action and through legislation? In other words, whether it is possible, with the material and moral pressure of society and of the State, to lead the workers as a mass to undergo the entire process of psycho-physical transformation so that the average type of Ford worker becomes the average type of worker in general? Or whether this is impossible because it would lead to physical degeneration and to deterioration of the species, with the consequent destruction of all labour power? It seems possible to reply that the Ford method is rational, that is, that it should be generalised; but that a long process is needed for this, during which a change must take place in social conditions and in the way of life and the habits of individuals. This, however, cannot take place through coercion alone, but only through tempering compulsion (self-discipline) with persuasion. Persuasion should also take the form of high wages, which offer the possibility of a better standard of living, or more exactly perhaps, the possibility of realising a standard of living which is adequate to the new methods of production and work which demand a particular degree of expenditure of muscular and nervous energy.

To a limited but none the less important degree, phenomena similar to those created on a large scale by Fordism have been and still are occurring in certain branches of industry and in certain not yet "Fordised" establishments. To build up an organic and well-articulated skilled labour force in a factory or a team of specialised workers, has never been easy. Once the labour force or the team has been built up, its components, or a part of them, sometimes not only finish up enjoying monopoly wages but are not dismissed from work in the event of a temporary check in production. It would be uneconomic to allow the elements of an organic whole so laboriously built up to be dispersed, because it would be almost impossible to bring them together again, while on the other hand reconstructing it with new elements, chosen haphazardly, would involve not inconsiderable effort and expense. This is a limitation on the law of competition determined by the reserve army and by unemployment, and this limitation has always been at the origin

of the formation of privileged labour aristocracies. Since there has never functioned and does not function any law of perfect parity of systems and production and work methods valid for all firms in a specific branch of industry, it follows that every firm is, to a greater or less degree, "unique" and will form a labour force with qualifications proper to its own particular requirements. Little manufacturing and working secrets, or "fiddles", practised by this labour force, which in themselves seem insignificant, can, when repeated an infinite number of times, assume immense economic importance. A particular case of this can be observed in the organisation of work in the docks, particularly in ports where there is an imbalance between loading and unloading of goods or where seasonal pile-ups of goods alternate with seasons which are entirely dead. There has to be a skilled labour force which is permanently available (which does not absent itself from the place of work) to deal with the minimum of seasonal or other work, and this leads to the formation of a kind of closed shop with high wages and other privileges, opposed to the mass of "casual" workers. The same thing happens in agriculture, in the relationship between tenant farmers and "*braccianti*"⁴¹ and also in many industries which have "dead" seasons, either for reasons inherent in the industry itself (as with the clothing industry) or because of the inefficient organisation of the wholesale trade which does its buying according to a pattern of its own which is not properly geared to the pattern of production.

SHARES, DEBENTURES AND GOVERNMENT BONDS

What radical change will be brought about in the area of small and medium savings by the present economic depression, if, as seems probable, it continues for some time to come? It can be observed that the slump in the stock market has produced an enormous shift of wealth and a phenomenon of "simultaneous" expropriation of the savings of vast masses of the population almost everywhere, but in America most of all. Thus the malignant processes which had grown up as a result of inflation just after the war have started up again in a number of countries and have begun to operate in countries which did not experience inflation in the

⁴¹ "*braccianti*": landless agricultural labourers, who are not fixed wage earners but are hired by the day according to the work to be done. The problems of organising in a single movement "*braccianti*" and small tenant farmers, with their obviously conflicting immediate interests, were particularly acute in the Romagna and the Po Valley. See also p. 75.

earlier period. The system whose application the Italian government has intensified in the last few years (continuing a tradition which already existed, though on a smaller scale) appears the most organic and rational, at least for a certain group of countries. But what are its consequences likely to be?

Difference between ordinary and preference shares, between these and debentures, and between shares and debentures on the free market and government bonds.

The mass of savers is trying to get rid of shares of every kind, which have been devalued to an unprecedented degree. It prefers debentures to shares, but it prefers government bonds to any other form of investment. It could be said that the mass of savers wants to break off any direct connection with the *ensemble* of private, capitalism, but that it does not refuse its confidence to the State, It wants to take part in economic activity, but through the State, which can guarantee a modest but sure return on investment. The State thus finds itself invested with a primordial function in the capitalist system, both as a company (state holdings) which concentrates the savings to be put at the disposal of private industry and activity, and as a medium and long-term investor (creation in Italy of various mortgage houses, industrial reconstruction, etc., transformation of the Banca Commerciale,⁴² consolidation of the savings banks, creation of new forms of Post-Office savings, etc.). But once, through unavoidable economic necessity, the State has assumed this function, can it fail to interest itself in the organisation of production and exchange? Will it leave it, as before, up to the initiative of competition and private initiative? If this were to happen, the crisis of confidence that has struck private industry and commerce would overwhelm the State as well. The formation of a situation which obliged the State to devalue its bonds, either through inflation or otherwise, in the same way as private shares have been devalued, would become catastrophic for the *ensemble* of socio-economic organisation. The State is therefore led necessarily to intervene in order to check whether the investments which have taken place through State means are properly administered. This

⁴² Mortgage houses. The most important of these was the Istituto Mobiliare Italiano, formed in November 1931, during the Great Depression, which issued Government guaranteed bonds and provided investment loans to small and medium-sized commercial and industrial enterprises. The transformation of the Banca Commerciale took place at the same time, the Bank receiving Government help when it was in danger of collapse.

In this passage the words "holding", "deficit" and "dumping" are all in English in the text.

explains at least one aspect of the theoretical discussion about the corporate regime. But control by itself is not sufficient. It is not just a question of preserving the productive apparatus just as it is at a given moment. It is a matter of reorganising it in order to develop it in parallel with the increase in the population and in collective needs. It is in these necessary developments that private initiative is involved in the greatest risks, and here therefore that State intervention should be even greater, not that it is entirely free from dangers itself, indeed far from it.

These elements are emphasised, as being the most organic and essential. But there are also other elements which are leading towards State intervention, or provide a theoretical justification for it—increasing protectionism and autarkic tendencies, investment premiums, dumping, salvaging of large enterprises which are in the process, or in danger of going bankrupt; in other words, as the phase goes, the “nationalisation of losses and industrial deficits” (etc.).

If the State were proposing to impose an economic direction by which the production of savings ceased to a “function” of a parasitic class and became a function of the productive organism itself, such a hypothetical development would be progressive, and could have its part in a vast design of integral rationalisation. But for that it would be necessary to promote both agrarian reform (involving the abolition of landed income of a non-working class, and its incorporation into the productive organism in the form of collective savings to be dedicated to reconstruction and further progress), and an industrial reform. One could thus reduce all income to the status of technico-industrial functional necessities and no longer keep them as the juridical consequences of pure property rights.

This complex of demands, not always acknowledged, is at the origin of the historical justification of the so-called corporate trends, which manifest themselves for the most part in the form of an exaltation of the State in general, conceived as something absolute, and in the form of diffidence and aversion to the traditional forms of capitalism. The result of these phenomena is that in theory the State appears to have its socio-political base among the ordinary folk and the intellectuals, while in reality its structure remains plutocratic and it is impossible for it to break its links with big finance capital. Besides, it is the State itself which becomes the biggest plutocratic organism, the *holding* of the masses of savings of the small capitalists. (The Jesuit state of Paraguay could be usefully recalled as a model for a number of contemporary ten-

dencies. That a State can exist politically based simultaneously on the plutocracy and on the "ordinary folk" is not in any case entirely contradictory, as is proved by the example of France, where the rule of finance capital could not be explained without the political base of a democracy of petit-bourgeois and peasant *rentiers*. For complex reasons, however, France still has a relatively healthy social composition, since there exists there a broad base of small and medium-sized farming properties. In other countries, on the other hand, the savers are cut off from the world of production and work. Saving in these countries has too high a social cost, as it is obtained with a level of existence for industrial and especially agricultural workers which is far too low. If the new structure of credit were to consolidate this situation, in reality it would be a turn for the worse. If parasitic savings, thanks to State guarantees, were to be rendered exempt even from the general hazards of the normal market, then on the one hand parasitic landed property would be strengthened and on the other hand industrial debentures, with legally determined dividends, would undoubtedly impose an even more crushing burden on labour.

AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN CIVILISATION

In an interview given to Corrado Alvaro (*L'Italia Letteraria*, 14 April 1929) Luigi Pirandello declares: "Americanism is swamping us. I think that a new beacon of civilisation has been lit over there." "The money that runs through the world is American (?!), and behind the money (?!) runs the way of life and the culture." (This is true only of the scum of society, and it is this cosmopolitan scum that Pirandello, and many others with him, thinks makes up the whole "world".) "Does America have a culture?" (It would be more to the point to say: does it have a unitary and centralised culture, i.e. is America a nation of the French, German or English type?) "It has books and customs(?). Its customs are its new literature, which penetrates through the best fortified and defended doors. In Berlin you do not feel the gap between the old and the new Europe, because the structure of the city itself offers no resistance." (Today Pirandello could no longer say the same thing, so it is to be understood that he is referring to the Berlin of the night clubs.) "In Paris, where there is an historical and artistic structure, where the evidence of an indigenous civilisation is present, Americanism is as strident and jarring as the make-up on the face of an aging *femme du monde*."

The problem is not whether in America there exists a new

civilisation, a new culture, even if only as a "beacon", and whether it is invading or has invaded Europe. If the problem were to be posed in that way, the answer would be simple: no, it does not exist, and indeed all that they do in America is to remasticate the old European culture. The problem is rather this; whether America, through the implacable weight of its economic production (and therefore indirectly), will compel or is already compelling Europe to overturn its excessively antiquated economic and social basis. This would have happened anyway, though only slowly. In the immediate perspective it is presented as a repercussion of American super-power. In other words, whether we are undergoing a transformation of the material bases of European civilisation, which in the long run (though not all that long, since in the contemporary period everything happens much faster than in the past ages) will bring about the overthrow of the existing forms of civilisation and the forced birth of a new.

The elements of a "new culture" and "new way of life" which are being spread around under the American label, are still just tentative feelers. They are not due to a new "order" deriving from a new basis, because that has not yet been formed, but are due to the superficial apish initiative of elements which are beginning to feel themselves socially displaced by the operation (still destructive and dissolutive) of the new basis in the course of formation. What is today called "Americanism" is to a large extent an advance criticism of old strata which will in fact be crushed by any eventual new order and which are already in the grips of a wave of social panic, dissolution and despair. It is an unconscious attempt at reaction on the part of those who are impotent to rebuild and who are emphasising the negative aspects of the revolution. But it is not from the social groups "condemned" by the new order that reconstruction is to be expected, but from those on whom is imposed the burden of creating with their own suffering the material bases of the new order. It is they who "must" find for themselves an "original", and not Americanised, system of living, to turn into "freedom" what today is "necessity".

The criterion then is that both the intellectual and moral reactions against the establishment of the new methods of production, and the superficial praises of Americanism, are due to the remains of old, disintegrating strata, and not to groups whose destiny is linked to the further development of the new method. This criterion is extremely important, and explains how it is that some elements in responsible positions in modern politics, who base their fortunes

on the organisation of middle strata of the population as a whole, do not wish to take up a position but remain "theoretically" neutral, and resolve practical problems by the traditional methods of empiricism and opportunism. (Compare the various interpretations of ruralism given by Ugo Spirito, who wants to "urbanise" the countryside, and by other writers blowing on their panpipes.)

In the case of Americanism, understood not only as a form of café life but as an ideology of the kind represented by Rotary Clubs, we are not dealing with a new type of civilisation. This is shown by the fact that nothing has been changed in the character of and the relationships between fundamental groups. What we are dealing with is an organic extension and an intensification of European civilisation, which has simply acquired a new coating in the American climate. Pirandello's observation on the opposition that Americanism encounters in Paris (but in Le Creusot?) and on the immediate welcome that it supposedly had in Berlin proves, in any case, that the difference between it and "Europeanism" is not one of nature but of degree. In Berlin the middle classes had already been ruined by the war and by inflation, and Berlin industry has very different characteristics overall from that of Paris. The French middle classes did not undergo either occasional crises, like the inflation in Germany, nor did they suffer the organic crisis of 1929 with the same intensity as Germany. For this reason it is true that in Paris Americanism can appear like a form of make-up, a superficial foreign fashion.